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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIAN ELECTION AND AFTERMATH: THE GOG ESTIMATE
OF THE THREAT AND PLAN FOR DEALING WITH IT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT. REASONS 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) In recent meetings, Prosecutor General (PG) Adeishvili and key officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) have expressed serious concerns about security on election day and opposition protests after the election. Having uncovered Patarkatsishvili,s coup plot, the MoIA has taken steps to respond to the threat. But the threat remains. The PG said the level of risk from Patarkatsishvili depends on how much cash he can smuggle into the country to buy agitators. The Georgians are aware of attempts by Patarkatsishvili to establish many small accounts at banks around the country at amounts below the National Bank of Georgia,s requirement to report cash transactions. The PG said he knows of withdrawals from existing Patarkatsishvili accounts, but believes the cash available will be much less than Patarkatsishvili had planned for. But the PG said Patarkatsishvili,s supporters are not the only ones they are worried about. He said the MoIA has credible evidence that supporters of the United Opposition candidate, Gachecheladze, plan to have weapons and Molotov cocktails available for use after the election.

¶2. (C) MoIA officials have said their first worry is security of polling stations on election day. With 3,400 precincts spread across the country, the MoIA doesn,t have enough police to protect them all. In his secretly taped conversation with MoIA official Kodua, Patarkatsishvili laid out his scheme to ruin the election on January 5 by having agitators interfere with polling stations. The call by opposition leaders yesterday for supporters to gather outside of polling stations on election day has increased concern by the MoIA. The MoIA admits the polling stations are vulnerable. Their plan is to have police units poised to react to trouble at the precincts rather than try to take preventative measures, so as not to inadvertently provoke confrontations.

¶3. (C) The MoIA,s next worry is concurrent rallies beginning on January 6 that could lead to clashes between supporters of different factions, with the police caught in the middle. Opposition leaders have fed this concern by declaring that if the United National Movement (UNM) celebrates by public gatherings immediately after the election, they will call their supporters to the streets to protest. Both the UNM and the opposition have requested permits for rallies following the elections: UNM to take place at Freedom Square and the opposition starting at Rike Park across the river and continuing to Freedom Square.

¶4. (C) There is plenty of talk in Tbilisi about how many supporters the opposition parties can bring to the streets to protest the elections, motivated either by greed or by principle, and whether they will be armed. The MoIA will have a better idea once they see what happens and judge the

temperature on election day. The PG estimates the opposition will have far fewer protesters than the 50,000 who came out for the November 2 demonstrations, but even 20,000 determined protesters can pose a serious threat. As a Deputy Minister told us yesterday, the MoIA is hoping for the best but preparing for the worst.

15. (C) The MoIA has a more thoughtful plan and is better equipped now than in early November. They have equipped the police with modern riot gear and acquired armored personnel carriers in case the police need protection from firearms and Molotov cocktails. We have heard the plan involves putting police inside government buildings while leaving the demonstrators free to carry out peaceful protests on the streets. If the protestors try to storm buildings or resort to violence, the police will respond quickly to disburse the demonstrations. The PG told us they will not allow a street mob to overthrow the government and will take whatever steps are necessary to enforce the results of the election.

16. (C) Comment: The attitude of opposition leaders has grown more defensive, aggressive and combative as the election has approached. They seem to recognize that Saakashvili will likely win, are frustrated and spoiling for a fight. If Saakashvili wins, all sides expect rallies and protests starting on January 6. The extreme political polarization and high emotions of the people make a combustible mix. Meanwhile, a major snowstorm has descended on the country and the snow is forecast to continue through Sunday, January 6. The snow not only will decrease voter turnout but will dampen the enthusiasm of demonstrators. The weather combined with Orthodox Christmas on January 7, will hopefully reduce or at least delay the threat of violence. End Comment.
TEFFT